

City of Hood River
Planning Commission
Public Hearing
April 2, 2018

Hood River City Hall
City Council Chambers
211 2nd Street
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chair Arthur Babitz at 5:43pm

PRESENT: Vice Chair Arthur Babitz, Commissioners Casey Weeks, Sue Powers, and Mark Frost

ABSENT: Commissioners Tina Lassen and Bill Irving

STAFF: Senior Planner Kevin Liburdy, Associate Planner Jennifer Kaden, and Planning Department Administrative Assistant Bobbie Van Tassel

II. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S UPDATE:

Senior Planner Kevin Liburdy noted that Planning Director Dustin Nilsen is out of town. The next hearings will be on April 16th.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

A. File No.: 2017-38 – Westcliff Lodge

Vice Chair Babitz opened the hearing, read the procedural script and asked the commissioners to disclose any ex-parte contact, bias, or conflict of interest.

Sue Powers disclosed that she visited the site noting the amount of green space and age of buildings.

Arthur Babitz explained he knows the applicant and architect but has not discussed the project with them in any way.

No other ex-parte contact, bias, or conflict of interest was declared by any commissioner.

Babitz asked if any audience members would like to question any commissioner on any disclosure, bias, ex-parte contact, or conflict of interest, or otherwise challenge any commissioner. There were none.

Babitz asked if any commissioner would like to make a motion to disqualify any other commissioner. There were none.

STAFF REPORT:

Senior Planner Kevin Liburdy presented a staff report on File 2017-38. The proposal is to modify an existing Conditional Use Permit for the Westcliff Lodge to add 65 motel units, - a net increase with a total of 122 rooms at build out - , and a banquet facility. Construction is proposed to be phased over a five-year period. Existing motel buildings, other residential buildings and the White Buffalo Wine Bar are proposed to be demolished and replaced with new buildings. The first phase includes the 18-room Courtyard West motel building and an associated parking area, as well as installation of utilities and construction of associated site improvements.

Liburdy explained the site location, zoning and applicable criteria. Two significant issues include the adequacy of sanitary sewer and transportation facilities to meet the demands of the proposed motel expansion. Conditions of approval are recommended to address these issues including: payment of a proportionate share of public sanitary sewer facilities consistent with the requirements of the City Engineer; completion of improvements along the site's Westcliff Drive frontage including widening one driveway and removing another; as well as revisions to the applicant's Traffic Impact Study, and payment of proportionate shares for construction of off-site intersection improvements where found to be necessary including at Cascade Avenue/Rand Road, and possibly other intersections on Cascade Avenue including at Mt. Adams Avenue.

Staff recommends approval of the application based on the findings and conditions of approval drafted in the March 26 staff report. However, condition number one needs to be revised to reflect the current application including the master plan for a total of 65 additional rooms, 122 rooms at build out, a banquet facility, the 18-room Courtyard West building and associated parking area, and associated site improvements.

Commissioner Casey Weeks asked why the transportation study triggered intersection improvements.

Liburdy explained that there is a failing intersection at Rand and Cascade, and the city adopted a proportionate share study to have developments contribute to a signalization project there. Contribution depends on proximity. The subject property is located within the area affected by the proportionate share study. The applicant's traffic study should be updated to verify the number of trips the development is expected to generate through that intersection as well as a couple of other intersections.

Babitz asked which aspects of the application will be happening first and which parts will be happening later and subject to further process.

Liburdy responded a condition was drafted to require the applicant to provide a clearer explanation of the phasing and timing of improvements. The current application includes the 18-unit Courtyard West building and 21 parking spaces, a water line and a driveway along the western boundary in the first phase. Liburdy mentioned the condition requires the city engineering department concurs with timing to ensure adequate public facilities are provided with each phase.

Commissioner Sue Powers asked if all phases will be approved tonight.

Liburdy responded yes, with up to 122 units on the site including one new building for 18 units at this time, and that all future phases are recommended to be reviewed at the staff level rather than calling the commission back for another public hearing.

TESTIMONY:

Grant Polsen of 2912 Talon Avenue in Hood River, OR, explained that, following approval of the expansion of the Columbia Gorge Hotel, he is now revisiting his project and would like to add stories to some buildings resulting in 150 or 160 motel units, though a final number has not been determined. He believes there is enough space on the site to provide adequate parking. He wants to make sure everyone has what they need to verify the adequacy of public facilities to serve the project. He understands he needs to update the traffic study and to work with the City on sewer plans. .

Babitz asked for verification if the draft conditions of approval would interfere with an increase in the number of units.

Polisen responded that he is familiar with the conditions, comfortable with them, and that he expects to pay higher proportionate shares based on the increase in rooms. The only change to the staff report would be regarding the banquet facility, explaining that it will be used exclusively by guests on site for their events. There is a large outdoor space but no indoor space at this time, so this would provide flexibility without increasing the size or impact of events. The first phase of the project would include installing infrastructure to accommodate the total number of units at build out.

Weeks asked to clarify room number – 38 additional rooms, meaning a net increase of 103 rather than 65?

Polisen confirmed but was unable to give a definite amount of additional rooms.

Powers asked about additional staff with the added rooms as well as the banquet space.

Polisen confirmed he would need to hire additional staff, and stated that banquet room will service people who are already there. Overflow parking has never been an issue for weddings or other events. There is enough parking on site for all events to avoid parking on the street.

Babitz asked Liburdy the process of revealing new information and how to move forward with process.

Liburdy responded that he is optimistic with subsequent reviews to get the details right. Liburdy mentioned that utility issues are of the biggest concerns and recommended proceeding with the hearing, during which he would review the findings and conditions to verify if there are other issues.

Polisen explained that water will be looped through the site and fire suppression systems will be improved to ensure guest safety.

Powers suggested that there should be a cap on the number of proposed rooms that correlates with the parking plan.

Polson responded that there is room to add more parking, but maintaining the landscaping and outdoor space is very important to him.

Commissioner Mark Frost asked about staff parking.

Liburdy responded that the parking requirement for the General Commercial Zone does not provide a specific ratio of parking for hotels and motels, instead requiring one space per employee and adequate parking for clientele. The staff report includes findings that if there was one space per room, 40 would remain for staff exceeding needs for staff. The commission can help determine if one space per room is adequate plus one space per employee.

Polson noted that this would be the same ratio approved for the Columbia Gorge Hotel.

Babitz asked for proponent testimony.

Elizabeth Betts , civil engineer with Klein & Associates, 1411 13th Street Hood River, OR explained that she is working with the applicant and there are a couple of conditions of approval to clarify. Regarding condition 16, Betts explained water is provided by Ice Fountain Water District and a separate tap should not be required for irrigation. Condition 19 addresses stormwater management and there appears to be a typo. Also, recognizing the fractured basalt will not clog maybe the condition can be changed to require working with the City Engineering Department rather than specifying hard numbers in "b" and "c". Betts explained that increasing the number of rooms would not change the footprints of the structures so there would be no increase in hard surfacing.

Liburdy noted that hard surfacing may increase if additional parking is needed to serve the additional rooms.

Babitz asked for neutral or opponent testimony. There was none.

Babitz asked for rebuttal from the applicant. There was none.

Liburdy asked Polson if he could provide a specific number of rooms or cap on the number of rooms being proposed.

Polson was unable to specify the number of proposed rooms.

Liburdy asked if the hearing should be continued.

Polson explained he was open to coming back to the planning commission with a maximum number of rooms.

Weeks suggested the applicant do some research to verify a maximum number of rooms.

Babitz asked staff how to proceed.

Liburdy responded that, if the applicant requests a continuance of the hearing to a date certain, that would be acceptable. Liburdy suggested May 7th if the hearing were to be continued.

Polsen requested a continuance of this hearing to May 7th.

Vice Chair Babitz asked the commissioners if there was any objection to continuing the hearing to May 7th. There was none. As such the hearing was continued to May 7th at 5:30pm in the council chambers.

Five minute recess at 6:25pm.

Meeting resumed at 6:30pm.

B. File No.: 2018-01 – Willow Ponds Planned Unit Development

Vice Chair Babitz opened the hearing and asked if there were any new audience members who did not hear the procedural script that was read for the first hearing. One audience member requested and received a copy of the script.

Babitz asked for disclosures of any ex-parte contact, bias, or conflict of interest.

Commissioner Mark Frost disclosed that he lives in the Willow Ponds PUD, and recused himself from the hearing.

Arthur Babitz explained he knows the applicants but has not discussed the project with them in any way.

No other commissioners disclosed any ex-parte contact, bias, or conflict of interest.

Babitz explained the city attorney confirmed that the planning commission needed a quorum to open the meeting however, following Frost's recusal, three members were sufficient to proceed with the hearing and make a decision based on the majority of voting members.

Babitz asked the audience if they would like to challenge any commissioners on ex-parte contact, bias, or conflict of interest. There were none.

Babitz asked if any commissioner would like to make a motion to disqualify any other commissioner. There were none.

STAFF REPORT:

Senior Planner Kevin Liburdy presented a staff report on File No. 2018-01. The proposal is considered a Major Modification of the preliminary development plan for Phases 4-6 of the Willow Ponds Planned Unit Development. In 2014 the applicants received approval including a 34-lot subdivision and that final order, File No. 2014-44, is incorporated into the

current staff report by reference. The current proposal includes relocating a segment private street and changes to the layout of lots and common open space areas, as well as to the location of pedestrian ways and off-street parking areas. The subdivision is now proposed to be constructed in two phases rather than three.

Liburdy explained the site location, zoning and applicable criteria, and noted that written testimony was received today via email to be entered into the record as Attachment "G". Staff recommends approval of the application based on the draft findings and conditions of approval in the staff report.

Babitz asked when the property was annexed.

Liburdy stated that this property was annexed into the City in 2013. In 2014, the applicants submitted a new application for Phases 4-6 that is still valid, and the current proposal is to amend that decision.

Babitz called a two minute recess to read the submitted testimony that was added to the record as Attachment "G".

TESTIMONY:

Applicant Jacquie Brown Barone, PO Box 1570 Hood River, OR addressed the letter that was added to testimony. Regarding concerns about traffic on Rocky Road, the development has always had four street access points since the original approval. The pedestrian path created over time was always going to be a paved access.

Babitz asked staff if Rocky Road was annexed and is a City street.

Liburdy responded yes.

Commissioner Sue Powers asked about Carr Drive.

Liburdy responded that the existing segment of Carr Drive off of Frankton Road is in Hood River County's jurisdiction but it is inside the Urban Growth Boundary and eventually is expected to be a City street. Inside the Willow Ponds PUD, the segment of street being discussed tonight is private.

Barone explained that staff's recommendation for construction of the segment of Carr Drive in the PUD as a part of Phase 4 is problematic because it would require starting over with a new wetland delineation. As such she proposes to construct that street segment as a part of Phase 5.

Babitz asked for proponent testimony.

Cindy Thieman of 3920 Blackberry Drive, Hood River, OR asked the applicant if the pedestrian footpath can be relocated to move foot traffic away from the middle of her driveway.

Barone responded that the pedestrian path is temporary, but the location will be taken care of with boulders or other method of directing people.

Thieman supported the lower impact on wetlands.

Babitz asked for neutral or opponent testimony. There was none.

Babitz asked for applicant's rebuttal. There was none.

STAFF RECAP:

Liburdy responded to the applicant's concern about having to revise the wetland delineation if the segment of Carr Drive in the PUD is required to be constructed in Phase 4 and suggested that, rather than further delaying the project, it was acceptable to construct it in Phase 5. ...

Liburdy suggested striking two sentences from the conclusion section of the staff report that recommended construction of the segment of Carr Drive in Phase 4.

Babitz closed the record.

DELIBERATIONS:

Commissioners began discussing the application.

Liburdy acknowledged that he should have responded to the written testimony received from Melanie Thompson during the staff recap. He explained that he did ask the Public Works Department if they had any concerns with installation of "Emergency Access Only" signs until the gravel road is improved as a full public street. They did not have concerns if such signage is necessary to satisfy concerns of neighbors, but they did not recommend prohibiting access.

Babitz asked if there was any objection to reopening the hearing for an audience member to ask a question. There was none.

Babitz stopped deliberation and reopened the record for testimony.

TESTIMONY:

Gemma Furno of 610 Nina Lane, Hood River, OR, expressed concerns about limiting access to the gravel road for emergency access only. She appreciated the concerns that were expressed and suggested the gravel improvements would discourage use of the road. However, it would be nice if it were available for some of the equipment needed to build the next phases of Willow Ponds.

Babitz asked if anyone else has comments on that or any other issue.

Powers asked staff what signs are possible.

Liburdy responded that the request by Melanie Thompson is signage for "emergency access only."

Commissioner Weeks asked for clarification of whether it is a public or private street.

Liburdy responded with clarification of segments that currently are public and private, as well as timing of anticipated improvements.

Weeks suggested avoiding installation of any signage identifying the street at Rocky Road until it is improved.

Assistant Planner Jennifer Kaden asked if this section of Blackberry Dr. has signage.

Jacque, Pasquale, and Brad confirmed there is no signage at the intersection of the gravel road at Rocky Road.

Babitz closed the record at 6:56pm.

DELIBERATIONS:

Weeks stated that, in response to the written testimony, he does not see traffic becoming an issue with the lack of signage on Blackberry Drive until it is built out.

Powers suggested it will take no time for the gravel road to be used even if it is not signed.

Babitz stated his opinion about public right-of-way and, whether it is improved or not, the public has a right of access. In the past he has encouraged the public to use public rights-of-way rather than let people park boats in them or pretend they are private. We are not encouraging people to use the road but access should not be restricted unless there is a safety issue.

Liburdy read the condition of approval from the 2014 decision pertaining to access across Tax Lot 2503.

Babitz stated that he does not feel like the Planning Commission has a right to restrict public access so he does not favor adding conditions related to that.

Weeks had no other comments.

Powers agreed with Weeks.

Babitz agreed with Weeks and Powers.

MOTION:

Weeks made a motion to approve file 2018-01, with the changes to strike the last paragraph of the conclusion on page 4 of the staff report, subject to the draft conditions of approval.

Powers seconds motion.

There was no further discussion.

Motion passes unanimously, 3-0.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

March 5, 2018 Minutes

MOTION:

Powers made a motion to approve the minutes from March 5, 2018 as drafted.

Frost seconds motion.

Motion passes unanimously, 4-0.

IV. ADJOURN:

Babitz adjourned the meeting at 7:06pm.

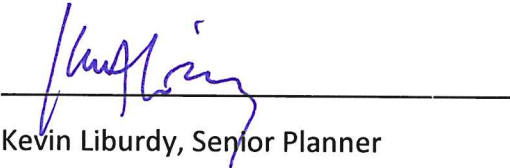
ATTEST:




Arthur Babitz, Vice Chair



Date



Kevin Liburdy, Senior Planner



Date (Approved)